



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2007
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ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – Another Louisiana resident pled guilty yesterday in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced.

WENDY S. PATE, age 38, of Ethel, Louisiana, pled guilty September 19, 2007, before U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a bill of information charging her with two counts of making false and fraudulent claims for disaster assistance benefits. The case was investigated by the U.S. Postal Service's Office of Inspector General with assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. As a result of her guilty plea, PATE faces a maximum sentence of five (5) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred twenty-eight.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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